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THE WEATHER, BEVERLY HILLS CA

☁ Friday	87°   64°
☁ Saturday	84°   65°
☁ Sunday	81°   64°
☁ Monday	79°   63°
☁ Tuesday	78°   62°
☁ Wednesday	77°   61°
☁ Thursday	77°   62°

## City Council Approves Joint Powers Agreement



The Beverly Hills City Council approved the Joint Powers Agreement at its Oct. 3 meeting.

BY ERIC LICAS

Council members finalized a renewed Joint Powers Agreement with the Beverly Hills Unified School District (BHUSD), proposed a name for the planned Metro station on Wilshire Boulevard, and amended a pilot program to allow the installation of the first fully automated parking lift in the city.

The latest iteration of the city's

arrangement with the school district was unanimously approved as part of the consent calendar on the agenda of the council meeting on Oct. 3. It covers the use and maintenance of BHUSD's facilities retroactively from July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2026.

The projected budget for the first year of the agreement is \$13.4 million, growing

See CITY COUNCIL, page 12

## DuPont Clinic Files Lawsuit Against City and Officials

BY CLARA HARTER

The city of Beverly Hills and several city officials have been named in a lawsuit regarding an abortion clinic that was slated to open in the city. The case, *DuPont Clinic, PC, a California professional corporation, et. al. v. City of Beverly Hills*, also names as defendants Mayor Dr. Julian Gold, City Manager Nancy Hunt-Coffey, Deputy City Manager Keith Sterling, City Attorney Laurence Weiner and Chief of Police Mark Stainbrook.

The complaint alleges causes of action for inducing breach of contract, interference with contractual and economic relations and misrepresentation, among others. It seeks both compensatory and punitive damages.

At press time, the city informed the Courier that it had not had a chance to review the complaint served against it. The lawsuit is but one aspect of the controversy surrounding the clinic's opening. In August, DuPont filed a separate lawsuit against the building landlord Douglas Emmett, alleging that its lease to operate the clinic at 8920 Wilshire Blvd. was improperly terminated.

In September, the Office of the Attorney General of the State of California served an investigative subpoena on the city, seeking responses to an extensive list of interrogatories and document production requests pertaining to the city's involvement in the

See CLINIC, page 19

## Council Gives Bike Lanes the Green Light

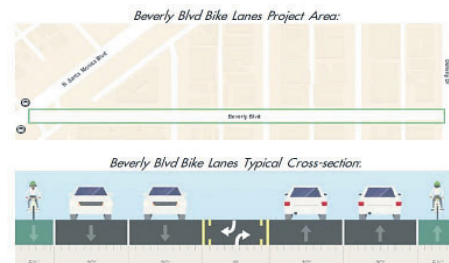
BY CLARA HARTER

In a win for cycling enthusiasts and environmentalists, the Beverly Hills City Council approved plans to add bike lanes to a 0.3-mile stretch of Beverly Boulevard, despite some safety concerns.

The lanes will be added between Santa Monica Boulevard and Doheny Drive, a roadway traveled by approximately 23,000 vehicles and 58 cyclists a day, according to a city report.

Between Jan. 1, 2016, and Dec. 31, 2022, there were 42 collisions on this segment of Beverly Boulevard, two of which involved cyclists.

Council hopes that the installation of the lanes, which will be protected by narrow poles known as "delineators," will improve traffic safety and encourage more bicycle



Graphic courtesy city of Beverly Hills

New bike lanes will be installed on a 0.3-mile stretch of Beverly Boulevard

use. The lanes will also connect to three other bicycle pathways, thereby closing a critical gap in the area's bicycle network.

"I probably cycle six out of seven days here in Beverly Hills and I use it as my primary mode of transportation," said resident

See BIKE LANES, page 12

## Beverly Hills Joins Lawsuit to Postpone 'Zero-Bail' Policy

BY CLARA HARTER

Beverly Hills has decided to join 12 other cities in a lawsuit that seeks to postpone implementation of the Los Angeles County Superior Court's new "zero-bail" policy, which eliminates cash bail for most felonies and misdemeanors.

This decision was made during the City Council closed session on Oct. 3, Public Information Officer Lauren Santillana told the Courier.

See 'ZERO-BAIL', page 19



## Church of the Good Shepherd Granted Landmark Status

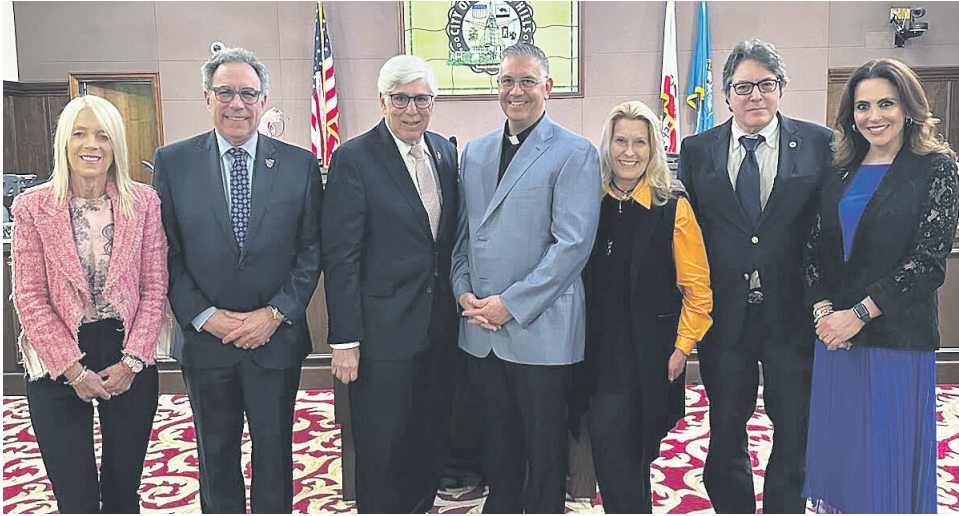


Photo courtesy city of Beverly Hills

Members of the City Council pose with Church of the Good Shepherd Pastor Fr. Ed Benioff and parishioner Christine Redlin at the Oct. 3 City Council meeting.

BY ERIC LICAS

The Beverly Hills City Council unanimously voted to designate the Church of the Good Shepherd as a landmark listed in the Beverly Hills Register of Historic Properties at its regular council meeting Oct. 3.

The church is the oldest religious building in the city and will celebrate its 100th anniversary on Dec. 12.

"I'm very humbled and honored to be the pastor at this time," Good Shepherd's Fr. Ed Benioff told the Courier during a brief. See **GOOD SHEPHERD**, page 19

## Rent Stabilization Commission Debates Inspection Program, Rent Increases



The Rent Stabilization Commission met Oct. 3.

BY NATHAN ANSELL

Having completed a review of proposed amendments to 2022's Rent Stabilization Ordinance (Resolution RSC-16), the Rent Stabilization Commission discussed some of these changes prior to any formal City Council recommendations.

This month's meeting centered on four categories of potential RSC-16 updates, including policies related to habitability reporting and rent increases for units with active violations. Chair Lou Milkowski steered the Commission through two hours of questions, comments, and debates, its longest meeting since January.

Prior to considering the amendments, Senior Management Analyst Cameron Kesinger invited two public comments. The first, a written statement from Apartment Association of Greater Los Angeles Executive Director Dan Yukelson, was cut short due to the three-minute time limit. Yukelson's abridged message expressed support for a complaint-based inspection program over a proactive system and decried the "harassment that property owners often undergo at the hands of the city of Los Angeles."

The second speaker was Mark Elliot, a longtime tenant and founder of Renters Alliance. Elliot pointed to an old report that acknowledged problems with a previous self-attestation proposal, which he called a "means to avoid taking any substantive action." He also characterized the lack of proactive enforcement as a long-standing issue.

"This is old wine in a new bottle," Elliot said. "No wonder we have problems, problems that were highlighted in a memo from city officials 17 years ago. What was true 17 years ago continues to be true today."

Discussion of the first altered recommendation, which concerned landlord attestation and tenant anonymous reporting, reflected a similar schism among the commissioners.

Originally, Resolution RSC-16 featured a baseline inspection of all 7,793 apartment units citywide in addition to the existing tenant-submitted grievance system. Deputy Director of Rent Stabilization Nestor Otazu's first proposal was to implement a landlord attestation instead. The document would be screened by renters, who could flag any violations with photo or video proof within 30 days.

Rather than undergoing complete inspections, owners would be placed into categories affecting the frequency of checks and the percentage of a building's units that would require examination. Repeated offenses would move properties across the tier system. Tenants would be able to flag issues anonymously if they felt uncomfortable identifying themselves through a formal complaint.

Commissioner Donna Tryfman favored the idea of a proactive reporting system. Tryfman was supportive enough to raise the possibility that the city had enough staff resources to go through with the initial plan, to which Otazu replied that the idea could bring challenges.

Vice Chair Neal Baseman, meanwhile, claimed that the attestation was impractical, and that anything besides a complaint-based system interfered with a goal of improving relationships.

"Maybe sometimes the city needs to be in the middle of it, but not from the beginning," Baseman said. "We want to encourage landlords and tenants to get along, not have the city be this Big Brother."

Another of the revisions to Resolution RSC-16 was aimed at a prohibition of annual rent increases with unaddressed violations. According to Otazu, this section needed to be revised or removed for several reasons. The language, most notably the mention of an "unaddressed" violation, was too vague – the resolution in its current form did not

See **RENT STABILIZATION**, page 12

COCKTAIL ATTIRE SUGGESTED

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**CITY COUNCIL, from page 1**

to \$13.8 million the following year and then \$14.2 million in its third year. The deal also authorizes the purchase and maintenance of security cameras on campus at a cost of nearly \$2 million.

The approved consent calendar also included an item to increase spending on after school programs. Council members agreed to massively increase funding for the use of Star Sports Theatre Arts and Recreation's facility in Culver City, increasing the amount of money set aside for that expense up from the \$100,000 allocated in the current fiscal year to up to \$500,000 for the upcoming year.

The consent calendar also included the formal adoption of interim rules defining whether property owners who wish to split single-family lots into two separate housing units may qualify for exemptions to certain zoning restrictions. The provision puts Beverly Hills' municipal code in compliance with the California HOME Act, also known as SB9.

The council also took up the matter of a name for the planned Metro Purple Line Section 2 Station on Wilshire Boulevard. Riders will access the station from escalators between Canon Drive and Reeves Drive. However, a survey of 200 regular metro riders and 200 nonriders found that naming the facility the Wilshire/Beverly Station would make it easier to recognize for people trying to navigate the transit system, Metro Community Relations Officer Mindy Lake said during the meeting.

"I think the neighborhood identity really is Wilshire Beverly Drive," Vice Mayor Lester Friedman said.

Representatives for the Beverly Wilshire Hotel attended the meeting to oppose naming the station after that intersection. They fear doing so might cause travelers to associate their business with the transit station. That could negatively impact the company's reputation, particularly if a notable crime at the Purple Line stop made its way to headlines, Beverly Wilshire Director of Public Relations Kiersten Dunn and the hotel's Director of Sales Chris Gleeson said.

Councilmember Sharona Nazarian was especially vocal in recognizing the hotel's concerns. She pointed out that the station's entrance would be closer to Canon Drive and recommended using that street in the facility's name.

Meanwhile, Councilmember John Mirisch pointed out that people trying to get through the city may confuse Beverly Drive with Beverly Boulevard. He said he preferred naming the station after Canon Drive for clarity's sake.

Mayor Dr. Julian Gold suggested dropping Wilshire Boulevard from the name and calling the stop the Beverly Drive station. That would make it easy to place, geographically, for riders while distancing it from the hotel.

Councilmember Lili Bosse and Vice Mayor Friedman found that to be an adequate compromise, allowing a motion to pass 3-2. The city council's suggested name of "Beverly Drive Station" will be heard at an upcoming meeting of Metro's board of directors on Oct. 26.

Officials also amended a pilot program to allow the installation of the first fully

automated parking garages in Beverly Hills, despite concerns over traffic and safety voiced by several residents during the regular meeting of the City Council on Oct. 3.

The first such facility would be part of a three-story commercial building at 8633 Wilshire Blvd. Current plans would allow the structure to accommodate as many as 76 vehicles.

Numerous residents told council members they were worried about how that might affect traffic.

Community member Isabel Hacker presented a letter critical of the project signed by "every resident on my street." Aside from the potential for traffic jams, they also expressed concern over what they characterized as a relatively unproven startup, Volley Automation, behind the design of the automated parking system.

Others noted that the project's developer, Skanska, does not intend to own it permanently.

"They're planning to sell the building once the tenants are in place," one resident said during public comment. "So, in the long run, if the system fails it will be absolutely the neighborhood's problem."

Volley currently has one fully automated parking garage up and running in San Francisco. So far it has not experienced any significant shutdowns or issues, the company's CEO, Ryan McKillen, said during the meeting. A human attendant will still be present during business hours and numerous redundancies like a backup generator or extra robots are built into the system, McKillen said.

Studies conducted by Skanska show there should be enough space inside the garage so that cars waiting for a spot don't wind up lining up on Wilshire Boulevard or Carson Road. Those findings were reviewed and supported by the city's engineers, Beverly Hills City Planner Masa Alkire said.

However, residents like Hacker were skeptical. They called for an independent traffic study to be conducted.

"For me, the issue is that this is a little bit untested," Councilmember Mirisch said. "I don't want to tell the residents what's best for them. I think we've heard from them and their concerns... It just seems like all the residents, the whole block, has an issue with it."

Gold, Friedman, Bosse and Nazarian followed the recommendations of planning staff and voted to allow the construction of fully automated garages in Beverly Hills, outnumbering Mirisch 4-1.

Council members also discussed proposed rules outlining how medical marijuana delivery companies may set up shop in the city during public hearings. Those types of businesses had been banned in Beverly Hills, as previously reported by the Courier. But the passage of the Medicinal Cannabis Patients' Right of Access Act in Sacramento last year now prohibits cities from outlawing them.

The council moved forward with the new rules, tentatively voting 5-0 to approve them. They are scheduled to revisit the matter for a second reading and final consideration during their next formal meeting. ●

**BIKE LANES, from page 1**

Eytan Elbaz. "Having a protected bike lane on Beverly Boulevard is certainly something that I would use and would give me a bit more confidence to bike there more regularly, as there is a decreased chance that somebody runs into me."

Public response to the proposed new lanes has been largely favorable. In a Sept. 7 meeting of the Traffic and Parking Commission, 25 community members spoke in support of the project and three spoke against it. The project received four votes in favor and one vote against it.

Those in favor of the project praised its positive impact on bikers and the environment, while those against it raised fears about traffic safety and concerns that isn't part of a continuous network of lanes.

Nevertheless, these concerns were significant enough to prompt the council to take a close look at the proposed lanes during its Oct. 2 study session.

Traffic and Parking Commission Chair Ron Shalowitz, who was the sole "no" vote on the lanes, shared his safety concerns. While he supports the location of the lanes, he believes installation should wait until the rainy El Niño season passes this winter, the city repairs sections of the road and considers other measures to slow traffic on the speedy thoroughfare.

"I do think it's important, but right now I don't think that the road conditions warrant it," he said.

While council members recognized that slowing vehicle speeds and ensuring safety is a top priority, they ultimately did not believe that this necessitates delaying the project.

**RENT STABILIZATION, from page 4**

define a timeline to address issues, nor did it clarify whether a complaint was "addressed" if it was acknowledged or resolved. Other parts, such as the definition of "habitability" and the suggested 30-day period, offered multiple interpretations as well.

Otazu also found that a forced rent freeze would be an ineffective deterrent, due to the combination of the existing citation system and the possibility of landlords' noncompliance. In that case, the two cases might be evaluated separately and arrive at conflicting verdicts.

The commissioners also clashed on the importance of anonymity in reporting throughout both sections. Commissioner Kandace Lindsey-Cerqueira asserted that tenants might be less likely to report violations if a landlord is aggressive. Commissioner Frances E. Miller, a landlord herself, questioned whether a landlord even had such an option if they could not raise rent prices or evict without cause, suggesting that tenants were the ones in a position to retaliate more.

"I don't understand the value of [anonymity]," Miller said. "Even whistleblowers in Washington eventually have to testify, and they are identified."

In response, Otazu noted that filing a complaint itself can make a tenant uncomfortable or create friction. Other commissioners noted that even under its previous form, a vindictive landlord could create a hostile reporting environment or increase rent after the complaint was

"It seems to me clear that we need to have bike lanes, and the fact that it's not a full network, well it's certainly better than nothing, and hopefully can lead to a network," said Councilmember John Mirisch. "With everything that I'm hearing, there's no reason not to do it. There's no reason to delay it."

Public commenters in support of the project highlighted the fact that it will cause minimal disruption to the road's layout as there is currently no street parking nor a middle turn lane. The only minor change required is narrowing the car lanes from 12 feet to 10 feet.

Supporters also pointed to the benefits of connecting to existing cycling routes on Palm Drive and Santa Monica Boulevard as well as planned bike lanes on Beverly Boulevard in West Hollywood. Lastly, some cyclists praised the environmental and health benefits of increased bike use.

"People who choose active methods of transportation live longer, they're healthier, they interact with their communities in a way that would not be possible in a personal automobile," said Jacqueline Ma, who commutes by bike to Cedars-Sinai, which is near the proposed lanes.

"The benefits of this lifestyle choice are significant and the benefits of commuting by bike are profound and worth the prioritization of this worthy project," she added.

The entire project is estimated to take \$10,000 to complete and Mayor Dr. Julian Gold asked staff to report back to council if they anticipate the installation going 10% or more above budget. ●

addressed.

"I'm talking about any awkward, uncomfortable situations that may lead to retaliation," Otazu said.

Two other amendments were discussed throughout the meeting. Specifics related to the Habitability Checklist, guidelines that the landlord would have to confirm to be following (and that tenants would use to flag habitability-related conditions), prompted a set of comments.

The Commission also considered its own role as an appeals body. Otazu expressed a desire to scrap Resolution RSC-16's planned establishment of the Commission as an "Administrative Hearing Board," since there was no city process for reductions in services determinations.

"We're recommending that it be separated from this program," Otazu said. "We think that this is an item that we can bring back to the Commission for future development."

After one final round of feedback, the session wrapped up with a review of August's monthly report and setting meeting dates through 2024. Even as the conversation turned more routine and procedural, however, there was a sense that these issues would remain on the front of the commissioners' minds in future meetings.

"I know we've all been anxious to express our opinions," Milkowski said. "It's part of the process." ●